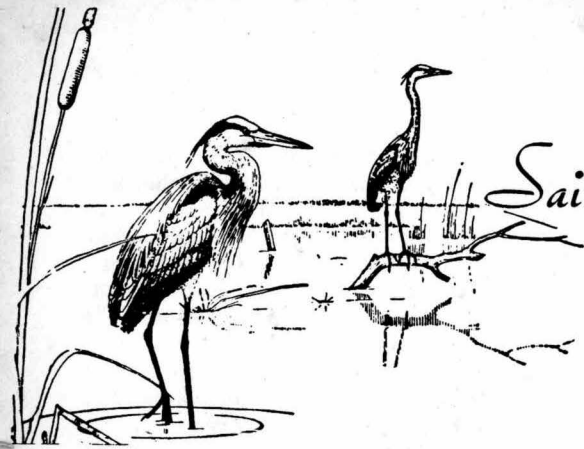




Saint Louis Audubon

Bulletin

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WALTER BERLET

TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1963

Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington — 8:15 P. M.

THE LIVING WILDERNESS

In a display of some of the most extraordinary close-up photography of wild mammals ever taken, Walter Berlet of Casper, Wyoming, brings to Audubon audiences a spellbinding story of life in the Rockies. More than eight years in production, *The Living Wilderness* covers the three states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.

Viewers are given new vision into the life histories of many different mammals—all of which are threatened with extinction, for various ecological causes. In scenes of drama and action, we watch a buck pronghorn forming and driving his harem, and defending them ferociously against intruders. We visit the original home of huge bison, and learn how they must continue to struggle for survival in large, ranging herds. Bull elks, belligerent in their breeding season, fill the screen in startling close-up shots, and spines will freeze as a giant bull charges straight into the Berlet camera. Moose, bighorn sheep, mule deer, and many other big mammals are shown in their natural surroundings, with emphasis on their ecological roles, and the different behavior patterns of the species.

A highlight of *The Living Wilderness* is the stalking of the cougar. The camera follows this majestic feline as Berlet explains its important role in wildlife management, and how it actually strengthens the species of animals on which it preys.

In beautiful time-lapse photography, we watch the Chinook wind, blowing down from the mountain peaks into the valleys, raising the temperature by 30 to 40 degrees in a matter of hours, and see its life-saving effect on near-frozen wild creatures.

MEXICO, LAND OF THE BIRDS OF PREY

BY DAVID A. EASTERLA

It was with a great deal of excitement that on December 22, 1961, Jim Gilmore, Hank Hartshorn, David Snyder, Wally George and I left Columbia, Missouri—stationwagon and trailer packed to the gills—for a two week trip to Mexico. The objective was to observe all forms of wildlife, particularly birds. The primary bird guide used was Blake's *Birds of Mexico*. One does not realize the significance of Peterson's field guides until he is without them. Mr. Peterson does, however, plan to have a field guide to Mexican birds before too long.

Although most of our time was spent in Mexico, during the trip several national wildlife refuges were visited on the Texas coast. The first stop was Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast where we were all fortunate enough to get a good view of several feeding whooping cranes from the specially erected observatory tower.

The next stop was at Rockport, Texas, where we had a nice visit with Connie Hagar, prominent Texas ornithologist. She suggested several areas for us to visit, but limited time kept us from making such stops. While at Rockport, we were able to observe several red-necked grebes, a species unusual for the area.

The next refuge visited was Laguna Atascosa on the extreme southern Texas coast where we observed many shorebirds and waterfowl. Probably the most common shorebird was the long-billed curlew, occurring in flocks by the hundreds. This was a most surprising sight. Other species that we all enjoyed on the refuge were: white-faced ibis, white-tailed kite, white-tailed hawk, Harris' hawk, wild turkey, snowy plover, cinnamon teal, mottled duck, white-fronted dove, golden-fronted woodpecker, kiskadee fly-catcher, vermilion flycatcher, curve-billed thrasher, Sprague's pipit, and a most beautiful bird, the green jay.

The most thrilling species observed at Laguna Atascosa was the white-tailed kite. We saw several in the area and never ceased to marvel at their mastery of flight by their gliding, maneuvering manners. The kiskadee flycatcher was another bird commonly seen along the refuge ditches; it was hard to imagine that such a beautiful bird was a flycatcher. Along one of the side roads within the refuge, we were surprised by the flushing of a very large flock of wild turkeys (about 20).

Probably the most unique Texas wildlife refuge from the standpoint of ornithology is Santa Anna N.W.R. located on the Mexican-U. S. Rio Grande border. Because it is the most southernly U. S. national wildlife refuge and borders Mexico, many endemic species have been observed here. The many flocks of chachalacas along the road leaves an impression not soon forgotten. The most unusual species seen here was probably the Lichtenstein's oriole. Species such as the ladder-backed woodpecker, numerous green jays, black-crested titmouse cactus wren, long-billed thrasher, olive sparrow, barn owl and beardless flycatcher can usually be observed at this refuge, although we did not see the latter two species. Several other lifers recorded in Texas before crossing into Mexico at Brownsville, Texas, were: least grebe, oliveaceous cormorant, and Say's phoebe. Three unusual wintering Texas species were: American oystercatcher, fluvous tree duck and one soaring Swainson's hawk.

After entering Mexico, we were most fortunate in meeting Edgar Kincaid, of the Texas Ornithological Society, at a service station. He was going to El Salto Falls, Mexico, for ornithological observation and suggested that we join his group which we eagerly did. Mr. Kincaid is a top field man, and going on a field trip with him where he identifies about 75% of the Mexican species by song is a tremendous help to one exposed to Mexican species for

the first time.

El Salto Falls, surrounded by jungle, is no doubt one of the most beautiful waterfalls in the Americas. The clear, bluish-green water, dropping for hundreds of feet into a stream lined with Mexican cypress trees, is probably equaled in few areas. A swim in this stream was most relaxing and refreshing. Mexicans from surrounding areas also come to this area for recreation and swimming, and we were constantly surrounded by curious Mexican youths.

Because we arrived late at night, getting up the next morning was one of our most thrilling days in Mexico, since this was our first big day.

The first bird to put in an appearance that morning was a peregrine falcon soaring over the falls followed by numerous white-collared swifts emerging from under the falls before sunrise. Green parakeets and red-crowned parrots patrolled the treetops in flocks. Macaws were heard but not seen. It was here that we observed the first truly tropical species, beautiful blue-crowned motmots and coppery-tailed trogons. Probably the rarest species we recorded in the area was the boat-billed heron. Other new species were: Mexican tiger bittern, wild muscovy duck, red-billed pigeon, squirrel cuckoo, green kingfisher, lineated woodpecker, barred antshrike, boat-billed flycatcher, social flycatcher, black phoebe, clay-colored robin, olive-backed warbler, Townsend's warbler, fan-tailed warbler, golden-crowned warbler, rufous-capped warbler, red-eyed cowbird, singing blackbird, black-throated euphonia, white-winged tanager, black-headed saltator, yellow-faced grassquit, hooded oriole, black-headed oriole hepatic tanager and lesser goldfinch.

From El Salto Falls we followed the eastern seaboard south to Tampico, then continued several hundred miles south of Vera Cruz. We then turned northwestward to Mexico City, northward to Xilitla, then to the United States.

One of the most impressive things about Mexico was the numerous birds of prey found throughout the country. There are probably two main reasons for this: (1) Most Mexicans cannot afford guns or ammunition, so the hawks are not molested by trigger-happy natives (2) Abundant habitat for numerous prey is still common, though disappearing at a fast rate. Thus, through human poverty and low standards, most birds of prey are protected, and they have ample food because of the many habitat areas supporting the necessary prey.

A total of 18 species of birds of prey were observed in Mexico. Numerous times it was hard to decide which hawk to watch first. The roadside hawk was the most common, averaging several per mile in most areas.

The kites attracted the most attention. What a thrill to see two or three white-tailed kites sailing over the same field or several everglade kites in a marsh fighting over one snail. It does not take too much play of the imagination to realize how the U. S. must have looked to the early settlers who were blessed (although most did not realize it) with numerous birds of prey. Today our sportsmen (ignorant hunters) along with so-called civilized ways (wilderness elimination) have made sure the birds of prey will be a subject more talked about than observed. Other birds of prey new to us were: zone-tailed hawk, gray hawk, common black hawk, chestnut hawk and aplomado falcon.

In addition to El Salto Falls, two places seemed outstanding for birds: Xilitla and marshy areas south of Vera Cruz. South of Vera Cruz we found vast marshes harboring many outstanding species. Here everglade kites were numerous along with the fork-tailed flycatcher, a species making the scissor-tailed flycatcher's tail look short. Although hopeful of seeing a swallow-tailed kite, our effort was in vain. The yellow-headed vulture and numerous cattle egrets were most surprising visitors in the marshy areas. To the north in the area of Tampico in similar marsh-like areas we had observed black-

bellied tree ducks, jacanas, ringed kingfisher and mangrove swallows.

After leaving the Vera Cruz area, we spent several days in Mexico City, resting, cleaning up (looking civilized again) and taking in sights such as the bull fights and Aztec ruins.

From Mexico city we went northward to Xilitla, Mexico, the same area that Peterson and Fisher had visited. We crossed the same ferry and went to Xilitla, but here we were confronted with the first Mexican unfriendliness. Accordingly, we left the town and camped several miles away on a mountainous, cloud forest road. Here we observed many new species, probably the most outstanding being the emerald toucanet, a green bird blending in beautifully with the tree top foliage. Other new species observed were: groove-billed ani, ferruginous owl (several), buff-bellied hummingbird, citreoline trogon, Amazon kingfisher, acorn woodpecker, bronzed woodpecker, white-striped woodcreeper, giant woodcreeper, rose-throated becard, painted bunting, Coues' flycatcher, brown-backed solitaire, yellow-billed cacique and blue bunting.

To mention a few of the other outstanding species we observed in Mexico: Inca dove, Aztec parakeet, the rare white-naped swift, wedge-tailed sabre-wing, broad-billed hummingbird, masked tityra, Cassin's kingbird, tropical kingbird, olivaceous flycatcher, white-necked raven, rufescent tinamou, Mexican crow (common), brown jay (numerous over most of Mexico), white-tipped brown jay, Mexican jay, black-eared bushtit, banded cactus wren, yellow-throated euphonia, yellow-winged tanager, pyrrhuloxia, collared seed-eater, black-headed siskin and black-throated sparrow (common).

A total trip list of 305 species was recorded, 236 species seen in Mexico (134 of these observed only in Mexico) and 171 species seen in the U. S. (primarily in Texas). Everyone added over 100 lifers to their life list.

Although not as numerous and usually more secretive than birds, several distinctive wild mammals were seen. At El Salto Falls we were fortunate in observing a group of about 20 coatis traveling on the cliffs in the water falls area. In this same area we also saw the red-bellied squirrel and a little farther south, both opossums, Mexican and four-eyed. The four-eyed opossum is a strange looking creature with a light spot above each eye giving the impression of two pairs of eyes. Not only were birds of prey plentiful, but the coyote was very common, a most encouraging sight, despite the fact that the Mexican have eliminated both the timber wolf and grizzly bear.

Bats were very numerous, several species being mist-netted each night outside our camp. The climax of bat-collecting occurred when we visited a cave at Xilitla. Here we succeeded in mist-netting about a dozen vampire bats of two species. We did not realize then the danger of contacting rabies without being bitten.

The number and variety of tropical butterflies probably attracted about as much attention as birds. Both Xilitla and El Salto Falls were a paradise for these rainbow-winged insects. Many a time these tropical lusters were too great a temptation and we were lured into swinging butterfly nets instead of binoculars. Such collected specimens as Boisduval's *Myscelia*, the giant sulphur, Cillene and eighty-eight are now treated and admired as if they were jewels.

We arrived home two weeks later, tired, travel-worn but in terms of natural history, a great deal richer. George and Gilmore collected mammals for a mammalogy project at Missouri University, and I collected a blue-crowned motmot for the University of Missouri ornithology collection. But best of all, we all had cameras and these reproduced for us much of the wildlife, scenery and people of Mexico.

No matter what your natural history interest may be, if the opportunity to go to Mexico ever presents itself, don't let it escape; go before it is too late. Remember, Mexico's wilderness areas are also disappearing. Mexico

may be slower than the United States, but the problem of wilderness elimination becomes more acute daily.



The epidemic of Red-headed Woodpeckers this fall was undoubtedly the result of a bumper crop of the type of acorns they relish. It was like old times watching these plentiful noisy, scolding birds gathering and storing their supplies, much of which will be overlooked later. In general, in recent years this colorful species has been scarce or conspicuously missing in its former haunts.

Dick Anderson put the White Pelican back into the St. Louis Area picture after its lamented long absence when he found 3 of these huge white birds at Swan Lake in Calhoun Co., Ill. A few days later, on Nov. 1st, Dave Jones also saw one of these pelicans circling over downtown St. Louis before it landed on the Mississippi River near the Admiral boat on the waterfront.

By far the best bird of the year and one of the all-time best area species was the Ruff on the Webster Groves Nature Study Society monthly bird count at the August A. Busch Wildlife Area in St. Charles County on October 7th, when 2 Ruffs were checked by Arthur Boroughf, Dr. Ralph Laffey and Dr. Thomas Thale. Two days later both were seen by Richard Anderson. The next day one remained there to be studied at close range through a 40 power scope by Kathryn Arhos, Mr. and Mrs. James F. Comfort and Bertha Massie. This species was an all time first for our region.

No. 2; White Ibis found at the Marais Temps Clair Marshes in St. Charles County by Dick Anderson and Kay Stewart on August 26th. Seen there later by Jim Comfort and David Jones on the same day. A first for the area.

No. 3; Little Gull at Grand Marais State Park in East St. Louis by Dick Anderson on November 14th. It was still there the following day when Dick checked the lakes. A first.

No. 4; Fish Crow by Mike Flieg in Illinois on a Mississippi River levee below the St. Louis Jefferson Barracks Bridge on September 12. A first.

No. 5; Black-headed Grosbeak by Dick Anderson and Kathryn Arhos in St. Charles County near O'Fallon, September 6th. A first.

No. 6; Red-throated Loon at Grand Marais on March 21st by Dick Anderson.

No. 7; Black Vulture on the levee on July 28th by Dick Anderson, Kathryn Arhos and Kay Stewart.

No. 8; Mississippi Kite at the levee by Earl Comfort, Bertha Massie and Kay Stewart on June 23rd. Later in the summer 3 more kites were seen by many observers. Two were birds of the year, indicating nesting there.

No. 9; Cattle Egret in St. Louis County near Valley Park by Walter George on June 9th. Later Wally discovered a nesting colony of this species on the levee. A count of 28 was made on August 18th which included immatures of the year.

No. 10; Swainson's Warbler by Jack Van Benthuyssen in St. Louis County in a willow thicket. Observed for quite some time on May 9th as it

sang. Heard in same locality again on May 13th.

Ten other rare species for 1926 were White Pelican, Whistling Swan, Piping Plover, Willet, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, Western Kingbird, Bohemian Waxwing, Evening Grosbeak, Common Redpoll and Henslow's Sparrow.

A 1962 REVIEW OF ST. LOUIS AREA BIRDING

BY J. EARL COMFORT

Because of the increased birding activities of several competent local enthusiasts we have an outstanding composite list for 1962 with a phenomenal list of rarities that is the best ever assembled in one year within a radius of 50 miles of the city. In the top 10 list 5 species were all time firsts or firsts as far as modern records are concerned. Our total list of 269 included 5 additional subspecies, bettering our 1961 record by 7 in the total count.

There were 8 birders with a list of more than 200 St. Louis Area species during the year. Top lister with 255 was Dick Anderson, who was the original lister, shared in the original listing or later found all but one of the high 10 unusual rarities. Following Dick on the dizzy height of the totem pole was Kay Stewart with 230. Kay's was one of the highest if not THE highest feminine list, her feat all the more remarkable because it was only her second year of birding in earnest—a year that was interrupted by her enrolling at Missouri U. in the fall. Others with the coveted 200 area species for the year were Earl Comfort with 223, Earl Hath, 213, Wally George, 208, Mildred (Mitzi) Anderson, 206, Kathryn Arhos, 205 and Steve Hanselmann, 203. Kathryn and Kay were newcomers in the select group, the former accomplishing the high count in her first full year of birding. Our sympathies to Mike Flieg, who missed by one species because he was confined during most of the year to Columbia, where he attends Missouri U as does Wally George, as reflected by his low list of 208, low, that is for Wally. Steve attended Iowa State as his list reveals. Given a full year in our region Steve would have been in the 50s. Dick had an amazing list of 199 during his lunch hours.

Discovery of excellent birding on the Mississippi River in Ill. on the levees below the Jefferson Barracks Bridge by Wally George in the early summer months aided and abetted the extraordinary list as did Dick's extensive checking, particularly at Grand Marais State Park in East St. Louis and in Forest Park.

Nineteen Sixty Two will long be remembered by bird watchers for its unprecedented invasion of Bohemian Waxwings and Evening Grosbeaks in the early months. The waxwings appeared in various sections of the region in numbers up to 8 or 10 while the Grosbeaks were seen numbering in the 30s at a feeder in Kirkwood. Ordinarily we are fortunate if we can list even one of the 2 species during any given year.

Nearby Swan Lake was our most popular birding spot during October, November and December. Rarest species there were Common Loon, Oldsquaw Duck, Harlan's and Rough-legged Hawks, Horned Grebe and Red-breasted Mergansers. On our November 24th trip to the lake we found an astonishing number of Ring-necked Ducks assembled there, the concentration strung out for a great distance in the middle of the lake.

Federal Agent Charles (Chuck) Kniffen gave us 2 good fall listings, one a Hudsonian Godwit, the other a flock of 6 White-winged Scoters, an unusual number for this rare diving duck.

By far the best bird of November was Dick Anderson's phenomenal listing of a Little Gull at Grand Marais State Park; East St. Louis, another exciting first for our region. Dick also found 2 rare Bonaparte's Gulls in company with the smaller accidental bird.

On December 8th Earl Hath, Steve Hanselmann, Dave Jones and Earl Comfort decided to give the neglected levees of Ill. downstream from the Jefferson Barracks Bridge another chance to produce. We checked an unusual number of Red-tailed Hawks represented by various age color patterns, as well as 2 melanistic and one Krider's Redtail.

The Shaw's Garden Arboretum again gave us Red-breasted Nuthatches when Steve Hanselmann spotted 2 there in early December.

1962 ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

J. EARL COMFORT

Centered at Orchard Farm in St. Charles County, Mo., within a circle with a 15 mile diameter to include Mississippi River. Cultivated fields, pastures and airfield strips, 93%, bottomlands and marshes, 7%.

December 22; 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. cloudy to partly cloudy; temp. 27 to 42 degrees; wind ssw, 13 m.p.h.; floating ice on river, ground bare except for slight ice glazing over frozen surface, lakes and ponds frozen. Fifteen observers in 2 parties. Total party hours, 17 (4 on foot, 13 by car); total party miles, 33 (3½ on foot, 29½ by car).

Great Blue Heron, 1; Mallard, 61; Redhead, 4; Canvasback, 748; Lesser Scaup, 11; Common Goldeneye, 531; Hooded Merganser, 3; Common Merganser, 26; Red-tailed Hawk, 39; Bald Eagle, 9; Marsh Hawk, 11; Sparrow Hawk, 19 Ring-necked Pheasant, 1; Bobwhite, 2; Am. Coot, 3; Herring Gull, 7; Ring-billed Gull, 723; Mourning Dove, 70; Great-horned Owl, 1; Short-eared Owl, 1; Belted Kingfisher, 2; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 22; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 23; Red-headed Woodpecker, 21; Hairy Woodpecker, 4; Downy Woodpecker, 9; Horned Lark, 78; Blue Jay, 18; Common Crow, 751; Black-capped Chickadee, 22; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Tufted Titmouse, 9; Brown Creeper, 2; Winter Wren, 1; Carolina Wren, 2; Mockingbird, 3; Robin, 53; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 4; Cedar Waxwing, 31; Loggerhead Shrike, 3; Starling, 755 House Sparrow, 675; European Tree Sparrow, 73; Eastern Meadowlark, 23 Redwinged Blackbird, 8532; Rusty Blackbird, 5; Common Grackle, 724; Cardinal, 52; Purple Finch, 3; Am. Goldfinch, 65; Slate-colored Junco, 68; Tree Sparrow, 455; Field Sparrow, 2; White-crowned Sparrow, 5; Swamp Sparrow, 25, Song Sparrow, 65; Lapland Longspur, 211.

Total, 58 species, 2 additional races, or subspecies; about 15,070 individuals. Participants: Dick Anderson, Kathryn Arhodes, Alberta Bolinger, Duis Bolinger, Earl Comfort (compiler), Wally George, Steve Hanselmann, Earl Hath, Jimmy Jackson, Joel Massie, Fred Ruegesegger, Kay Stewart, Greg Tichacek, Dorothea Vogel and Mrs. Wm. Wiese.

Your Help Is Needed

The St. Louis Audubon Society is eager to embark on several special projects. These are efforts that will be fundamentally a part of the Society's program but which we have not been able to undertake because of limited funds.

With this thought in mind, the Society would welcome gifts of a special nature, either outright or monies that might form the basis of an endowment fund.

If you are interested, please consult our President or any member of the Board.

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